

## **Environment and Sustainability Committee**

Inquiry into Energy Policy and Planning in Wales

EPP 31 – Rhondda Cynon Taf

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council has the following comments to make in respect of the consultation letter from Dafydd Elis-Thomas AC / AM dated 2 August 2011 in respect of the above.

(i) Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCT) has considerable experience in dealing with windfarm proposals. These include proposals both within and outside the SSA and have involved mainstream planning applications and matters that are referred to the Department of Energy and Climate Change.

(ii) RCT does not consider that there is a compelling need to review TAN 8 and the SSAs at the present time and that this would introduce further uncertainty into an already complex process. However, it would recommend that when the TAN and SSAs are eventually reviewed, that a more extensive process of stakeholder and community engagement is undertaken. This may help to engage communities at a policy making stage rather than their only opportunity for involvement being at the later planning application stage, resulting in a policy fait accompli

(iii) RCT recognises the potential benefits of large energy proposals in Wales being determined in Wales particularly in terms of policy interpretation. However, it is recommended that further consideration be given to all such applications being determined at Local Authority level to minimise the current levels of double handling, together with issues of accountability and understanding for local communities, that the two tier system (whether administered at a UK or Welsh Government level) creates.

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